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ABSTRACT

Increasing needs of families have prompted Head Start organizations to build partnerships with businesses, schools, and health care agencies to better serve their clients. This report examines the efficacy of such partnerships and provides guidance for developing similar collaborations. The first chapter of the report explains why Head Start is so well-suited to partnerships, noting that because of its mission to provide comprehensive services, Head Start has always taken a collaborative approach. This chapter also notes recommendations for organizations considering partnerships with Head Start, such as learning about Head Start's decision-making structure, its components, its service delivery methods, and its staff and parents. The second chapter presents profiles of 12 successful partnerships with a variety of service organizations in communities across the country. The partnerships described highlight many critical concerns of Head Start children and families, including child care; adult education, training, and job placement; health and mental health services; nutrition services; partnerships with private businesses; male involvement in Head Start programs; and family support. The third chapter of the report identifies emergent partnerships that indicate promising results. These partnerships have been in service for less than 3 years, but are recognized as exemplary in the areas of employment and education, early intervention, mental health, and family support for incarcerated females. The fourth chapter provides practical advice for creating successful partnerships. Critical steps are outlined for beginning and maintaining partnerships, such as evaluating potential partners, identifying short- and long-term goals, creating an agreement, and evaluating the program. The report's concluding section notes some characteristics common to all the diverse partnerships profiled. Appendices contain a glossary, an information form querying about partnership efforts, and a National Head Start Association membership response form. (AS)

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Promising Partnerships

How to Develop Successful Partnerships in Your Community

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NHSA Partnership Office
Maggie Holmes • Henry Mack • Bethany Robertson

NHSA History

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) is the only national organization dedicated exclusively to serving the needs of the Head Start community. Our mission includes advocating for Head Start in the government, business, and private sectors; working to improve quality and expand enrollment through increased program funding; providing training and professional development for members; and helping Head Start parents become economically self-sufficient.

Beginning

In 1973, Head Start program directors from across the country joined together to form a nonprofit association to protect Head Start against the threat of decreased federal funding. The directors realized that the association needed to include the entire Head Start family, so in 1976, Head Start staff members, parents, and friends united for NHSA's first annual training conference. Over the past 20 years, our mission has changed from simply defending Head Start to actively expanding and improving the program.

Membership

The goal of NHSA is to serve all people involved in the Head Start community. Our two largest membership types are Head Start agencies and individuals. Individual members can be Head Start directors, parents, staff members, or friends—volunteers and other people outside Head Start who want it to thrive. With more than 2,000 Head Start agencies and 139,000 staff members serving 750,000 children and their parents, NHSA has worked carefully to develop services that meet all of our members' needs.

- Ron Herndon
NHSA President

- Sarah Greene
NHSA Chief Executive Officer

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National Head Start Association

Promising Partnerships

How to Develop
Successful Partnerships
in Your Community

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Maggie Holmes • Henry Mere • Bethany Robertson

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Introduction

We've got good news. Partnerships work. From Coos Bay, Oregon, to Des Moines, Iowa, and Binghamton, New York, we have discovered that Head Start organizations can build successful relationships with businesses, schools, and health care agencies. These Head Start agencies and their partners have developed direction, built momentum, and shared a commitment to common goals. How did this happen? Why is Head Start especially suited for building partnerships? How have some programs been successful? What are other Head Start programs doing? What steps can you take to build partnerships of your own?

Bringing You This Story

To bring you this story, our Partnership Office at the National Head Start Association gathered information from many different sources. Initially, we sent a survey to all Head Start programs and asked them to submit their best partnership stories. We followed this with a request for information in the National Head Start Association *Journal*, then asked for input from the network of state Head Start Association presidents and state collaboration project directors.

We passed on replies to an evaluation team of NHSA staff members, a state collaboration project director, and representatives of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Partners in Education (NAPE).

Based on this search, we profiled twelve successful partnerships and identified four upcoming ones in this publication. We believe these programs are exemplary, but we also recognize that there are many other innovative partnerships with Head Start across the country. If you are working in one of these, we want to know more about you. We are creating a database of partnerships so that we can provide technical assistance and create linkages within the Head Start Community. Please complete and submit the form in Appendix B and help to build our network.

Finding Information in This Book

Chapter 1 describes Head Start and explains why the program is so well suited to partnerships. This chapter is for people outside the Head Start community, or those who want to know more about Head Start's partnership role. In Chapter 2, Partnership Profiles, we introduce you to successful people in the field who tell you what they are achieving. We hope that their stories will inspire you to think of new ways to forge partnerships in your community. In Chapter 3, Upcoming Partnerships, we identify some of the emerging collaborations that seem to be producing results like those of full-grown, high-performance partnerships. In Chapter 4, How To Create a Partnership, we sum up all of this information with practical advice on how you can think about developing a partnership—if you are part of the Head Start community, or have the opportunity to work with a Head Start organization.

1 Why Partnerships? Why Head Start?

We are faced with an increasing demand for family support services. Recent data document the increase in poverty among children and young families and detail the intensity of their problems. Families face homelessness and substance abuse; reports of child abuse have tripled. Studies show families weakened by the everyday demands of work and family. They document the stress of unemployment and illiteracy, the impact of often violent communities, and dwindling support from the extended family. Each problem adds to the demand for family support services. But at a time when demand has increased, resources are declining for community-based programs to aid children in low-income families.

Some relief has been forthcoming. On a social level, changes in the family and renewed interest in preschool education have improved early childhood services. Legislatively, both the federal and state governments have responded. The federal government has improved Head Start's access to funding—changing rules for Medicaid eligibility, passing the Family Support Act and the Child Care and Development Block Grant program, and instituting new initiatives to integrate children with special needs. Some states have developed early care and education systems as well.

In 1989, the Council of Chief State School Officers called for new ways to support families and provide the foundation for a healthy life to each child. That same year, the National Governors' Association published *America in Transition*. The governors recommended a focus on prevention programs and urged better planning, coordination, and consolidation of current prevention programs. The National Conference of State Legislators asked states to assess their needs for early childhood programs, recom-

mending that child care providers look for new ways to reduce the cost of child care while improving its quality and accessibility.

These organizations recognized that increased demands require innovative solutions. And as these organizations and others advocated a more effective service delivery system, they began looking at partnerships and collaboration as solutions. Partnering and collaborating offer groups a way of working interdependently with other groups (or individuals) to gain maximum benefits for both sides. Although many view partnership and collaboration as mere "buzzwords" that don't carry much weight, Head Start looks at these words with a certain kinship. They are essential components of Head Start's unique character.

Understanding Head Start

Originally conceived as "Project Head Start" and initiated as a summer program in 1965, Head Start was developed as a national comprehensive family program to help preschool, low-income children enter school ready to learn. Today, Head Start programs nationwide focus on raising the degree of social competence of the children of low-income families. The path to accomplish this goal says a lot about Head Start's distinctiveness: It is built around the ideas of partnership and collaboration.

Head Start brings adults into a receptive and nurturing environment and builds on their skills in a non-threatening manner. Parents make policy and volunteer in the program. Community residents design, operate, and make decisions about programs that affect their children and families. Step-by-step, their skills grow, as does their self-esteem. With training, they often move into employment positions with Head Start; a recent Head Start Bureau Fact Sheet identifies thirty percent of all staff members as parents of current or former Head Start children.

Collaboration is also essential in Head Start. Because its mission is to provide comprehensive services, Head Start has always taken a collaborative approach to service delivery. To respond to their mandate, these programs must work with other organizations. Recent societal and legislative changes—welfare reform, block grants, the crossroads of new funding options, and the expansion of early childhood programs—show the nation is at a turning point in the way services are going to be delivered.

How then has Head Start addressed these changes? How is it responding to the increasing needs of families? Over the past five years, the underlying philosophy of Head Start community programs has changed. To reach more children and families, programs have gone from scrambling for resources to developing partnerships with other community-based organizations. More importantly, Head Start has become a pivotal institution in families' lives. As this program helps to guide children along their own developmental path, parents are directed from dependence toward self-sufficiency. Both paths are heavily orchestrated by public policies. In this role, Head Start must be viewed as a viable community partner in the delivery or enhancement of services to low-income children and their families. And, as others follow the trend toward comprehensive services and partnerships, Head Start is seen as a team player, looking to solve problems jointly with partners.

There is a lot to appreciate in the Head Start approach. After more than thirty years of playing a role to increase the social competence of low-income children, Head Start is able to share what it has learned: effective partnering requires a spirit of openness, there must be genuine respect for one another and the work being accomplished, and all partners must contribute fully, taking responsibility for any problems that arise.

Building Relationships with Head Start

As lessons about partnership are shared, it is important to tell the Head Start story as well. This story—of the program's mission and role in the community—is sometimes overlooked. As a result, the community at large often lacks a clear understanding of how comprehensive the Head Start services and structure are. People also may question the roles of Head Start staff as key players. As partnerships develop, all parties must understand Head Start's mission, its unique service delivery system, and the long-term benefits it offers children and their families.

But what does it mean to develop a partnership with Head Start? Some agencies and organizations may not be accustomed to working with people from the local Head Start organization. The unique parent-based structure can present barriers and challenges to organizations seeking to become Head Start partners.

If you are considering a partnership with a community Head Start agency, consider these recommendations:

- Get to know the Head Start decision-making structure.
- Take the time to understand how Head Start works, what its components are, and how services are offered to children and families.
- Get to know the Head Start program staff and parents. Head Start is like a family and has symbolic importance to the community.
- Respect the opinions of Head Start staff. They really do know their families and children (in fact, they may be former parents).

- Don't take offense if Head Start staff and parents express themselves in a very straightforward manner.

- Visit a Head Start agency and see how its comprehensive services work.

We believe that if you follow these recommendations, your organization will improve its chances at building a successful partnership.

Preparing for Future Challenges

In the future Head Start must be innovative and creative to meet the demands on its service providers. There must be a continuing cycle of finding new ways to work with others—especially nontraditional organizations. In this publication we have highlighted some "promising partnerships" that show what it will take to move into the twenty-first century and compete for funding. These stories paint a remarkably consistent picture of what it takes to create and develop a successful partnership. They affirm that partnerships work, offering the innovative solutions we all need to face increasing demands for family support services.

(2) Partnership Profiles

This chapter profiles twelve partnerships highlighting many critical concerns of Head Start children and families today. It begins with a **child care** partnership that addresses the need for Head Start to expand its hours and days of operation. Since the program began in the 1960s, families and their child care needs have changed drastically. Around the country, Head Start is exploring options for systemic change through partnerships with state-funded preschools, local education agencies, Title 1 education programs, and block grant activities for child care and development. While such arrangements are complicated, especially in terms of funding, they are essential in providing full-day, full-year services.

This section also profiles other success stories. Partnering with **adult education, training, and job placement** programs is critical as welfare reform sweeps the country. Almost half of Head Start families get some kind of public assistance, and they feel the effects of reductions and new welfare requirements. To support family efforts to become self-sufficient, Head Start must become involved with job issues.

Health /mental health services are ongoing concerns for Head Start. As funding levels decrease, programs have been forced to look for more nontraditional ways to provide required health services. A new focus on mental health issues has arisen in some areas in response to pervasive violence, the effects of which are felt acutely in both home and school. These partnerships have given Head Start access to much-needed mental health professionals and resources.

Better access to **nutrition services** is another ongoing issue. Here partnerships provide families with seamless service, aiding them in navigating complex rules and systems in times of declining resources.

Partnership with **private business** is an area that many Head Start programs are strengthening. Again, as federal dollars decline, programs seek to build relationships with businesses and corporations. Head Start programs are learning that they have something to offer the private sector, and they are becoming adept at building mutually beneficial relationships.

Head Start's relationship with **local education agencies** has varied widely from one community to another. This section shows how personal relationships developed into partnerships. As partners, the schools and Head Start created greater understanding between agencies and improved the services they offered.

Male involvement is a continuing concern in programs nationwide. Some programs experience difficulties instituting changes to accommodate male involvement. The activity profiled here describes how one community made this issue a priority and how male caregivers took the lead in bringing this concern to the forefront.

Family support includes a wide range of issues. In this section, we highlight a partnership that has resulted in a "web of support" for homeless families. Another focuses on incarcerated parents, offering services to increase parenting skills and maintain the bond between child and parent. These efforts are successful because they were launched in direct response to pressing matters in the community.

Finally, this section touches briefly on **special education** partnerships. The tendency for male minority children from low-income families to be mislabeled in elementary school is well documented. Partnerships in special education help to prevent such problems before they begin. In addition, parents learn strategies that can benefit their children in the school environment.

CHILD CARE

Kansas City, Missouri

Beyond Boundaries

Full Start Partnership Serves Children First

Children in low-income areas of Kansas City, Missouri, weren't being fully served by Head Start. They were underage or overage, their family income was slightly above Head Start requirements, or they couldn't find space in an existing Head Start program. Often these children were not getting important health and education services. How could they be helped?

Help became possible through a partnership between KCMC Child Development Corporation—the Head Start grantee in Kansas City—and two other child care centers. Together, they developed the Full Start program in 1994. "Full Start allows neighborhood child care centers to leverage Head Start funds to expand comprehensive services to more needy chil-

Program name: Full Start

When partnership began: 1994

Partners: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Heart of America United Way, Greater Kansas City Community Foundation & Affiliated Trusts, Missouri Social Services Dept., Kansas City Urban Affairs Dept., Jackson County Anti-Drug Tax program, KCMC Child Development Corp., United Inner City Services/St. Mark's Church, George Washington Carver Neighborhood Center

Mission/objective: To provide comprehensive medical, dental, and nutrition services; parent participation activities; and full-day, year-round, developmentally appropriate education to needy children

Funding: Private charities, Head Start, state and local government

Outcomes: The quality of early care and education for children is improved because KCMC makes Head Start dollars and training available to child care centers that serve Head Start-eligible children—those previously underfunded.

Evaluation: Surveys/questionnaires

More information: Shirley Stubbs-Gillette, Director, Planning and Development, KCMC Child Development Corporation, (816) 474-3751

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dren," said Dwayne Crompton, KCMC's executive director. His organization trains the staff of Full Start centers and ensures that those centers meet Head Start performance standards. Private charities and state and local governments subsidize children ineligible for Head Start, which funds services for the Head Start–eligible "full starters."

KCMC's Full Start partnership not only helps the children in the program, it helps their parents improve their economic position. "I feel very comfortable with my children being here," said Bridgett Parrish, a school cafeteria worker who supports her three Full Start children by working two jobs. "I wanted them to be in a school and they have lots of learning activities here. I know they are getting good care while I'm at work."

Dwayne is excited at seeing the program's positive effect on Full Start children. "This is only the beginning. Once the pilots are up and running and all the bugs are worked out, the potential for serving more Head Start–eligible children and expanding services to other needy children is explosive." Dwayne thinks partnerships like KCMC's can help thousands of children who don't fall within Head Start guidelines. "Full Start," he said, "has national implications."

Jobs Make a Difference

Employment Partnership Shows Jobs Aren't Only For Parents

When parents are employed, the obvious benefit is the regular income. But there are many other benefits as well, particularly for children. "When a woman's self-esteem is high, the children reap the benefits," said Julie Gonzalez, assistant director of Family Services for the WSOS Family Development Program. "When mom is working, they get to see the rewards of that."

That's why the WSOS Family Development Program is so proud of the partnership it has created with four county departments of health and human services and with local businesses. Their joint effort has placed 86 adults in the community in three years, and has a retention rate of more than 95 percent. With figures like that, it's not hard to convince business leaders to become involved.

Program name: WSOS Family Development Program

When partnership began: 1993

Partners: Whirlpool and other local businesses, four county departments, WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc.

Mission/objective: To create opportunities that will help the community build a better future

Funding: Office of Community Service, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

Outcomes: Placed 86 adults in jobs; linked people with other employees to provide transportation; used the county departments of health and human services to provide child care

Evaluation: Surveys/questionnaires

More information: Julie Gonzalez, assistant director of Family Services, WSOS Family Development Program, (419) 334-8911

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"The businesses are getting individuals or families who are focused, who want employment. They're really getting excellent people," Julie noted. "They don't want to invest a lot of money in someone who's going to quit in a month."

The partnership began as a grant from the federal Office of Community Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in October 1993. Since then, WSOS has developed a comprehensive program. A Head Start family member expressing a need to find employment participates in a five-week training course, usually offered one-on-one. Then a family development specialist makes a home visit. These specialists come prepared with computers so that a resume and job-search materials can be created on the spot. A family-needs assessment is also completed to see what other issues may affect the candidate's employment, such as child care and transportation.

The county departments of health and human services are key partners in meeting the child-care needs of parents. According to Julie Gonzalez, "All four counties work with us to make sure that, once we place the families, they do whatever they can to make sure day care is found." Without this link, many families would not be able to participate.

The business community has also been a valuable partner in the process. One mechanism that has helped the partnerships to flourish has been Head Start's participation in the employment partnership councils located in each county. Participants on these councils include employers, business leaders, and social service providers. "We go to every meeting we can, just to try to sell the program," Julie said. Through dialogue and networking at these meetings, the partnership continues to grow.

But that growth would not happen without the involvement of parents as well. The parent policy council has been involved in decisionmaking every step of the way, and parents have played a vital role in determining the direction of their program.

Health Promotion Center

Onsite Care Makes It Easy for Families To Be Healthy

"Often-times they didn't have the basic medical care they needed." That's what Jill Janes, the director of Head Start in Quincy, Illinois, noticed about the children entering her program. Many hadn't been immunized, and some suffered from easily treated maladies such as lingering coughs and colds. After asking some of the parents why their children had gone without medical care, Jill learned that some were unaware of the importance of preventive medicine, some were intimidated by clinics and hospitals, and several were unable to obtain medical care because they couldn't pay prior medical bills.

"So we thought if we could bring these medical services to our program," said Jill, "we could get kids immunized and their parents involved." Jill and the Head Start staff in Quincy started by forming an advisory group with representatives

Program name: Health Promotion Center

When partnership began: 1993

Partners: Public School System, local clinics, pediatricians, county health department, parents, mayor's task force, Head Start, and community representatives

Mission/objective: To provide better access to health services and Early Childhood Special Education for Head Start, pre-kindergarten "at-risk" children

Funding: County's Committee on Preschool Special Education and National Head Start Association Challenge Grant

Outcomes: Provides system to track preventive health services for children from birth to age five; created Passport system to monitor and provide full information on health-care needs of each child; immunized more than 280 children

Evaluation: Self-assessment instrument

More information: Ann McKinney, Early Childhood and Family Center, (217) 288-7121

from local health agencies. United by the desire to bring medical care to children who wouldn't receive it otherwise, health professionals from clinics in Quincy, the county health department, pediatricians, and community volunteers worked together to offer a Health Promotion Center at Head Start, one half-day a week.

The Health Promotion Center partnership worked. Together the partners were able to immunize all of the 282 children in the program, identify and treat other children's health problems, and provide health education and guidance to parents.

"A lot of it started through just talking," Jill added. One of the pediatricians who worked on the Head Start advisory board came up with the idea of "passports" that went with the children from one grade to the next, tracking their health care from Head Start to high school. The board thought it would be good to expand the program, so all of the people involved—from Head Start, the county health department, and other public health organizations—began looking for grants to fund the health services that comprise Head Start's partnership in Quincy.

Quincy, Illinois, saw that something as simple as conversing about a problem—"just talking"—could lead to a successful health partnership. Now the initiative is slated to go nationwide, helping many more Head Start centers form partnerships promoting the health of their children.

Comforts of Home

A Mental Health Partnership Takes Services to Families

"Sometimes for families, it's very hard to hear: 'You may want to talk to a therapist about this,'" said Glenda Wilcox, director of Early Head Start in Wichita, Kansas. As a result of a partnership with the Friends University Marriage and Family Program, many barriers to receiving treatment have been removed, and 112 Head Start families are receiving quality mental health care in their own homes.

Program name: Early Head Start/Child Care Association of Wichita

When partnership began: 1993

Partners: Friends University Marriage and Family Program, University Center on Family Living, Early Head Start of Wichita

Mission/objective: To provide mental health training to Head Start staff and mental health services to families; to provide a practicum and hands-on experience to university students

Funding: Jointly funded by Friends University and Early Head Start

Outcomes: Families receive comprehensive mental health services in the comfort of their own homes; Head Start staff has increased mental health skills; student practitioners have developed relationships with community resources.

Evaluation: Ongoing surveys & questionnaires

More information: Glenda Wilcox, Wichita Parent Child Center, (316) 267-1997

Glenda graduated from the Friends University Marriage and Family Program while working at Head Start, and she saw complementary aspects in the two programs. "In the class I was in, there was no one that had an early childhood background," she said. "In Head Start, we had that piece, but we didn't have a therapy component."

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The two programs began working together in 1993, focusing on the family education component of Head Start. Marriage and family master's degree students were hired as family educators who completed 90–minute home visits each week, in addition to teaching a three-hour parenting class. The home visits gave parents a chance to apply the skills being taught in class, but soon another component of the program developed.

"The therapists were very effective at conflict resolution and diffusing situations. But it was very obvious that many of these families wanted or needed therapy," Glenda said. As a result, an agreement was reached with the university that student practitioners could provide therapy to interested families and receive credit toward the 500 hours required for their certification. Family educators offer the services to parents and it is up to the family whether or not they participate.

Having the services available in the home makes a big difference for families. "It isn't in a sterile environment; it's on the parents' turf," Glenda said. Another benefit of having the therapist in the home is that the extended family can participate in treatment.

The university students benefit from the programs as well, besides working toward their degree. In addition to gaining experience in the cutting-edge field of in-home therapy, the students widen their horizons and strengthen their skills working with diverse, low-income populations. "It's been a real eye-opener for these students to see how well these parents manage," Glenda said. Seeing the families in the home helps the students gain understanding and provide more appropriate services.

As in any partnership, there have been some difficulties along the way. Sometimes early childhood and family therapy philosophies bumped heads. At other times, changes in the university structure affected

the availability of students. But a Friends University faculty member has provided the partnership team with ongoing assistance in resolving personal and organizational issues. Taking the time to provide staff training has given people the strategies necessary to overcome challenges.

The next step for the partnership is to work with the university to arrange for unpaid student internships and to explore an Employee Assistance Program. It's all a piece of Early Head Start's vision for comprehensive, community-wide mental health.

"Marriage" to WIC

"Out-of-the-Box" Thinking Brings Needed Services to Families

Many Head Start programs have working relationships with the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), but not every Head Start program would consider the relationship to be a marriage. But Kay Ach, the nutrition specialist of Seattle Head Start, uses that term to describe the partnership between her organization and the local [King County, Washington] WIC program.

Like most relationships, the partnership has evolved over time. After thinking about what was happening in the community as a whole, Kay contacted old friends at WIC in the fall of 1992. She suggested they get together and look at the "core of what was required in the community." But unlike some relationships that begin with a specific agreement, Kay said WIC and Head Start got together to "see if they could make something new."

Kay's vision was to create programs that focused on the recipients of nutri-

Program name: Seattle Head Start–WIC partnership

When partnership began: 1992

Partners: Seattle Head Start and King County, Washington, WIC program

Mission/objective: To promote and support regional, state, and local efforts to improve program coordination and service delivery for low-income children and families

Funding: Head Start and WIC

Outcomes: Provides families with health and nutrition services that may not be readily available to them in the community

Evaluation: Surveys and questionnaires

More information: Kay Ach, City of Seattle Head Start, (206) 386-1015

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tion services, not on the programs offering the service. So Head Start and WIC examined how parents accessed local services. They discovered that parents had to go to one place for the Head Start program and somewhere else for WIC services. They agreed that it was important to see the "big picture" on how the community's nutrition needs were being met.

The following winter and spring, Head Start and WIC conducted focus groups. "The focus groups provided a wonderful way to bring people in," Kay reported. The participants looked at the nutrition needs of the county and how these needs were being met. WIC subsidized the focus groups with a start-up grant. "But a grant is not necessary," according to Kay. "It only takes the time needed for people to sit down and negotiate with whatever WIC program service-delivery there is in the area. A partnership with WIC doesn't always require formality to begin."

A partnership may not require formality, but it does take time to grow. Since the original meetings and focus groups, the organizations have piloted a model nutrition program serving a southeast Asian community. Initially, a WIC nutritionist in the health clinic worked with the Head Start families and children and helped them complete the necessary paperwork. Since then, the position has developed further. Now the WIC nutritionist provides high-risk nutrition counseling and nutrition education in the classroom. In addition, Head Start maintains records and conducts WIC certifications.

Kay explained that although parents initially responded most positively to the WIC checks, they are beginning to see the link between the check and a nutrition service. Parents also receive health and nutrition screenings, information made available by both programs. They attend the classes for the nutrition service, tapping into parent involvement programs. "My hope," said Kay, "is that, down the road, we will start thinking 'out-of-the-box' and design programs that offer nutrition as a piece of healthful living."

Banking on Success

Business Sense Helps Head Start Expand Services

When Boyd County Head Start staff members noticed the vacant bank building, they thought it would be a great place for the Family Resource Center. So they decided to make it happen.

Jackie Anderson, Head Start director in Ashland, Kentucky, contacted the bank president and told him that Head Start would like to use the building to house the county's new Family Resource Center. She talked about how the center would help low-income parents raise healthier, better educated children and get better jobs themselves. She told him how the center would foster strong families. She said that his bank's unused building seemed to be an ideal location for the center, and asked if the bank would let them occupy it.

The bank president agreed. Pleased to help his community, he arranged

Program name: Boyd County Family Resource Center

When partnership began: 1993

Partners: First American Bank, Youth Service Center, Boyd County Family Resource Center

Mission/objectives: To create an ongoing, successful, holistic experience between home and school

Funding: Boyd County Resource Center, Head Start, and Catlettsburg Day Care

Outcomes: Assures that families are supported in their efforts to foster children's learning and development

Evaluation: Surveys and peer-review visits

More information: Norma Meek, Boyd County Family Resource Center East, (606) 739-5344

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for the bank to rent the building to the Boyd County Family Resource Center for a fraction of its actual market value. Now the center serves as a hub to provide social services like the Head Start Home Base program, in which parents receive education, health, and nutrition assistance so they can contribute more to their children's development. It provides GED classes and Parent University, a program that teaches job skills. Nearly 500 children have been served. The center even operated a Summer Enrichment Camp that offered parents much-needed day care and gave their children a place to learn and play. What made the summer program possible was the building's ample classroom and recreation space, along with Jackie Anderson's vision and drive.

"The 'day camp' was a life saver for me this summer," wrote one single mother whose child participated. "Being a single parent, the day-camp program made it affordable for me to work this summer.... We were amazed at all the activities that were offered. This program was a wonderful idea, and we hope it will be offered again next year."

The program will be offered again next year, and in the same building—the bank has agreed to lease it to Head Start for at least the next four years.

Big Area, Small Budget

Talk and Transport Create Success

Mary Jo Madvig, director of Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc., was faced with a big problem—an area of eight counties and 6,600 square mile. It takes up to four hours to drive from one end of the rural northwest Iowa program area to the other. Children and families are often isolated, since there is no community transit system and families often own undependable automobiles. As manager of the Head Start program, Mary Jo had to devise a way to transport the 300 children in this 18-school district area. But transportation is expensive. Initially, transportation costs ate up almost two-thirds of the Head Start program budget, which was only $300,000. Mary Jo was spending between $150,000 and $200,000 to transport children to regional centers, and costs continued to rise.

Program name:
Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc.

When partnership began: 1990

Partners: Public school system, local clinics, pediatricians, county health department, parents, mayor's task force, and community representatives

Mission/objective: To stretch available resources to serve more children and families without duplication of services

Funding: County health department and community

Outcomes: Money saved in transportation has enabled the program to extend a half-day, four days-a-week program into four full days in some centers, five full days in others

Evaluation: Surveys/questionnaires

More information: Mary Jo Madvig, Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc., (712) 859-3885

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Mary Jo thought about using school buses, but Head Start centers weren't in schools; they were in churches, legion halls, and outreach offices. To build a relationship with the school systems, she wrote letters of introduction to the eighteen school districts within her Head Start region. She visited school officials, but few were familiar with the Head Start program. She tried to convince school officials that she had a viable program, but they weren't interested. Mary Jo had run up against a major barrier.

When faced with obstacles, however, Mary Jo asks questions. "How," she wondered, "can we help our families? How can I build a relationship with the schools?" Mary Jo decided her first step was education. "I put on a dog-and-pony show," she said. She gathered educational materials, created a video, contacted all the organizations within her Head Start region, and began traveling more than 800 miles a week. "I'd speak to anyone who would talk to me." As her second step, she introduced herself to government officials. "I would say, 'We are Head Start and we need a home.'" Third, she invited schools to visit her sites. "When schools came to visit," she added, "I emphasized parental involvement. That was important to both of us."

Before long, Mary Jo's name became a household word and the community started to respond. People would tell her where rooms and space were available in school buildings. She moved into new locations in the schools and was able to ask her initial question once more: "What would it be like if you were to pick up Head Start children with school buses?"

Now, if Head Start children are on the bus route, buses pick them up at no additional cost. Junior high and high school students, trained as monitors, sit with the Head Start children on the bus and help them travel to and from the schools. There have been additional benefits as well. The money that Upper Des Moines Opportunity saved in transportation has enabled Mary Jo to turn her half-day, four days-a-week-program into four full days in some centers and five full days in others. Children and parents benefit: Children are more prepared to enter kindergarten, and parents are more involved in that transition. And

the schools, Head Start's partners, benefit too: their perception of disadvantaged families is changing, and—like Head Start—they now ask parents for input. Parents have also become more comfortable in the public-school setting.

For others facing similar problems in their community, Mary Jo has this advice: "Stay out there. To get partnerships and connections, you have to be visible in the community. There will always be turf battles and people will copy your ideas, but you just need to stay out there and brag. You've got to talk up Head Start."

Young Families Program

Head Start Brings Pieces Together To Make a Better Fit for Young Families

"Family development programs are like puzzles," said Diane Lithander, executive director of the Young Families Program in Billings, Montana. "We try to multiply our effectiveness by finding other 'puzzle pieces'—organizations to help us provide information and improve services for families."

Program name: Young Families Program , Inc.

When partnership began: 1991

Partners: School district, Head Start, Maternal Child Health, a local nutrition education program, Big Brothers and Sisters, Foster Grandparents Program, March of Dimes, Better Babies Program of the City-County Health Department, Junior League

Mission/objective: To help teenage parents improve their parenting skills, job-hunting skills, and self esteem

Funding: Local Maternal Child Health program

Outcomes: Teen parents have improved their parenting skills and overall self-sufficiency. The program has a 90 percent graduation rate.

Evaluation: Surveys/questionnaires

More information: Diane Lithander, Young Families Program, Inc., (406) 259-2007

The Young Families Program, a delegate agency of Head Start, has discovered many partnership puzzle pieces. It works with the school district, a local Maternal Child Health program and a nutrition education program, Big Brothers and Sisters, the Foster Grandparents Program, the March of Dimes, the Better Babies Program of the City-County Health Department, the Junior League, and many others.

"Partnership," said Diane, "is often a multipiece puzzle—sometimes you find the pieces; sometimes the pieces come to you. The key is cooperation." Diane began building her cooperative puzzle by establishing

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a relationship with the school system. "Since we had similar goals," Diane said, "we began to look at how we could work together." The partnership has enabled the school district to offer special services for at-risk students. Because the parent population of the Young Families Program is composed of teenagers, it made sense to work with the schools.

The successful partnership with the school system is due, in part, to what Diane and others call a "win/win philosophy." With this philosophy, all parties feel good about a decision and are committed to the action plan. In asking other agencies if there is something both parties can work out together, Diane tries to find common ground.

The collaboration between the Young Families Program and the local Maternal Child Health (MCH) program is also an example of the win/win philosophy. MCH nursing staff teach classes weekly at a Young Families' location. Young Families, in turn, offers special classes that help teenage parents improve parenting and job-hunting skills and their self esteem. "It becomes a challenge," said Diane. "When I'm looking at meeting clients' needs, I look to see if I am meeting Head Start's needs. But I also ask how we can meet the school district's needs, and I ensure we are meeting needs for maternal and child health. We juggle many balls, but we are clear in our communication at the beginning of a project. We are always surprised at how successful the collaborative projects can be."

If the win/win philosophy supports Young Families' successful partnerships, networking can be viewed as the pathway. "Networking is vital," stated Diane. Network supporters exchange ideas or information. Like many communities, Billings has a number of social service networks. Diane and the Head Start staff attend networking events organized by the United Way, the Billings Health Planning Coalition, and the Inter-Agency Council—an organization that brings groups together so they can learn more about one another. These programs can lead to individual meetings. "I'm getting together now with the head of a local teen program," Diane explained. We set aside a morning to see if we have common ground, and we

will explore possible future partnerships."

"We're always looking for partners," Diane continued. "There are often opportunities for state funding, but you have a better chance of getting funded if you are collaborating with other community projects."

"Networking," said Diane, "is being aware of what is happening in your community. It is knowing what is out there. And it is talking to a lot of people. Once we see that we have a specific need, we just ask, 'do you do something like this?' There is nothing magical," Diane concluded. "Anyone can do it ... but you have to ask. By asking, you find connections—you find your pieces."

Head Start's FAMILY

Fathers Advocating Male Involvement in the Lives of Youth

Denota Watson, parent involvement coordinator for a Philadelphia Head Start center, remembers the first time Eric Bradshaw came to a policy council meeting. "He looked around, saw there were only two other men at the meeting, and asked, 'Where are all the other men?'" When he was told only a few men showed up for meetings, he began to organize a group of fathers who had children in Head Start. He became chairman of the policy council and led the effort to involve Head Start fathers in their children's education and development.

To the great sadness of the Head Start program, Eric was killed in a car accident shortly afterward. However, the other fathers had liked and respected Eric and wanted to continue his work. So they formed a group as a tribute to him and called it FAMILY—Fathers Advocating Male Involvement in the

Program name: FAMILY (Fathers Advocating Male Involvement in the Lives of Youth)

When partnership began: 1992

Partners: Head Start, FAMILY program, community-at-large

Mission/objective: To involve Head Start fathers in their children's education and development

Funding: Head Start funds

Outcomes: Sponsors six-week parenting classes for fathers, encourages members to serve as "big brothers" to children whose fathers are not available to them. Temple University is using the program for a fatherhood study.

Evaluation: Interviews and site visits

More information: Denota Watson, Philadelphia Public Schools Head Start, (215) 299-7000

Lives of Youth. That was four years ago. Today, FAMILY is a self-sufficient organization and a partner with Head Start.

FAMILY raises money through the volunteer efforts of its members in fundraisers such as raffles, dances, and even a fashion show for men. With the funds it raises, FAMILY promotes activities such as the Male Involvement Luncheon and Symposium, where guest speakers from the professional community give presentations and guidance on career-related topics. FAMILY organizes Father's Day picnics for Head Start families, sponsors six-week parenting classes for fathers, and encourages members to serve as "big brothers" to children whose fathers aren't available to them.

The partnership between Head Start and FAMILY benefits individuals as well as the community-at-large. One member, Tyrone Mebane, is a testament to the group's success. Tyrone was a shy, reserved father of six when he joined FAMILY. As he became more involved with the group, he gained the confidence to serve on the Head Start policy council, and later became its chairman. With the help of the Head Start staff, he applied for and won a scholarship to Temple University, where he is earning a degree in early childhood education. He is still very involved with FAMILY.

The partnership between FAMILY and the Head Start center has been so successful that Temple University is using it as the basis for a study on fatherhood and Head Start. As Denota attested, "The FAMILY initiative is one of the best parts of our program."

Helping Families Reconnect

Puget Sound Creates Web of Support for Homeless Families

"There was just trust at the beginning." This is how Mary Seaton, in the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD), described the initial work three years ago that built a partnership between Head Start, representatives of family service agencies, transitional housing programs, and municipal child care authorities.

They first gathered to respond to a grant to develop a program to support homeless families with newborn to 5-year-old children. The purpose of the program was to provide year-round, full-day Head Start and child care services by licensed family child-care providers contracting with Head Start.

This program enables parents to attend work, training, and educational programs with the knowledge that their children are well cared-for during the day. Parents also participate in evening gatherings with other Head Start parents.

Program name: Puget Sound Homeless Services Project

When partnership began: 1992

Partners: YWCA, Kent Youth and Family Services, South King County Multi-Service Center, King County Child Care Program, Head Start

Mission/objective: To provide year-round-full- day Head Start and child care services

Funding: Head Start Homeless Services Demonstration Grant and state and county subsidies

Outcomes: Helped children and families access medical, developmental, and mental health services

Evaluation: Surveys and questionnaires

More information: Mary Seaton, Puget Sound Educational Services District Head Start, (206) 439-6910

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The Puget Sound Head Start Homeless Services Partnership allows PSESD Head Start to keep its costs for comprehensive services down and focus on what it does best—promoting the health and education of children, with their parents' help. State and county subsidies pay the child care providers for the child care slots. The YWCA and other local agencies with transitional housing provide family service case management to support parents in their work, education, or training goals. PSESD Head Start provides transportation, training and monitoring of the child care providers, and coordination of comprehensive service delivery—including a WIC component.

Mary likes the fact that the program is often "invisible" to parents because as problems and challenges arise for families, they are addressed by the Puget Sound Educational Service District's interlocking web of support. "When a person has been through a period of homelessness, they become disconnected from society," Mary explained. "We add more points where parents can reconnect."

"Forty-six percent of families," stated Mary, "are given some sort of additional resource or support in the areas of physical and mental health. They receive these supports based on being connected with us [Head Start], but not necessarily from us." Recipients have a variety of people to approach about their issues or concerns. Sometimes parents may talk with the Head Start bus driver before sharing information with their case manager. Many recipients choose to discuss a need or problem with their providers, who are trained to help parents and know when to contact the coordinator or case manager. Providers also support the parents, finding cars and even jobs. It's all about helping families reach their goal of self-sufficiency. "The parents learn to trust and rebuild community connections," Mary added.

Learning to trust has been essential for the families in the program and for the Homeless Services partners as well. This trust has been at the core of PSESD's success. Although the demonstration grant is ending this year, the partners are focusing efforts to locate additional funding. All parties expect it to come through.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Coos Bay, Oregon

Family Resource Network

Incarcerated Parents Continue To Build Relationships, Skills

Imagine what it might be like if you were a child whose parent was pulled from the home, placed in the back of a police car, and locked in a county jail. "It's traumatizing for a young person," said Denise Johnson of the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, California. "Children react to their stress—often with 'challenging' behavior."

Sixty percent of the children in the South Coast Head Start program had at one time or another faced a similar difficulty when one of their parents was incarcerated. These children had special needs, their teachers reported, and were burdened by their parents' absence. While South Coast Head Start wondered how they could deal with the problem, they knew that working with incarcerated persons could create possi-

Program name: Family Resource Network for Incarcerated Parents.

When partnership began: 1993

Partners: County jail, community college, Head Start, Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Mission/objective: To offer wrap-around services to incarcerated Head Start parents through on- and off-site parenting training and GED classes

Funding: NHSA Challenge Grant; also from local jail and the Commission on Children and Families

Outcomes: Eighty-five percent of the incarcerated parents reunite with their families. Incarcerated parents receive GED classes and parenting skills training.

Evaluation: Surveys

More information: Chris Bass, South Coast Head Start, (541) 267-0798

ble public relations problems. But they decided that the bottom line was that they had to do something to support the children.

Head Start began by forming a "family resource network," including specialists from colleges, counselors from high schools, and correctional representatives from jails. They decided they needed to increase public awareness of the problem. Many of the first steps were taken by Karen Helland, a parent involvement specialist for the South Coast Head Start program. She contacted Denise Johnson (the subject matter expert), assisted in developing a community-wide training program on incarcerated parents and children for the Coos Bay area, and began working with representatives from the county jail. This is where the partnership really began.

"The program would never have gotten off the ground had it not been for the county jail," noted Betty Albertson, director of South Coast Head Start. "They could have said 'No,' but they had Lt. Gordon Ogden—a man who cares about people. It was as simple as that."

Using money from a challenge grant offered by the National Head Start Association, the partners began to assemble a child-friendly visitation room at the county jail. They brought in rocking chairs, toys, and other items that would make a child feel more comfortable. The jail established a system where the county inmates could earn the privilege of using the visitation room. Funds also were used for parenting classes and GED classes for minimum security inmates.

As the team worked together on implementing the challenge grant, they received something else—national press coverage. A local story about the program's success was picked up by the Associated Press and then appeared as a story on the NBC nightly news. There was significant interest in the program at

that point. "We expected some bad press," said Betty Albertson. "We thought there would be concern about wasting time and tax dollars, but we have kept our focus the same. We focus on the kids. We focus on making the adults better parents so they can help the kids."

The partnership has changed since the original start-up grant. In 1995, South Coast Head Start received a grant from the local Commission on Children and Families. This grant funds a program for pregnant incarcerated women and pays for a half-time person to go to the jail, conduct classes in parenting, meet with minimum security inmates, and develop inmate transition plans. The grant also funds a curriculum called "Parenting Room Jail." But like all grants, funding only lasts so long. Head Start and the county jail are transfering the responsibility for the inmate program to the jail. And Head Start is working with the local business development council to market the parenting curriculum nationwide.

What about the kids? By continually focusing on this question, South Coast Head Start has developed an ongoing partnership with the county prison, educated many more persons in the correctional community about Head Start, and developed a business venture that may bring in additional revenue. But most important, they have been able to help the children of incarcerated parents.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Binghamton, New York

A Big Help

Onsite Speech Therapists Address Speech and Language Impairment

At his initial screening before entering the local Head Start program, the three-year-old boy hit the adults who tried to work with him. He was aggressive, impulsive, and lashed out unpredictably. By the time that child entered kindergarten, he was a happy, friendly boy, thanks to his speech therapist.

A speech therapist? As unlikely as it may sound, speech therapy was the key to his transformation. A speech therapist working at the Head Start center as part of its partnership with a local special education facility perceived correctly that the boy's problems stemmed from his inability to communicate. He was helped, as many other children have been, by the Broome County Child Development Council, Inc., Head Start–Special Education partnership.

Program name: Special Education Partnership

When partnership began: 1980

Partners: Local and county agencies, Literacy Volunteers of Broome/Tioga, Inc., Head Start, and Rehabilitation Services, Inc.

Mission/objective: To provide inclusive programming for children with severe disabilities in a regular educational setting

Funding: County Committee on Pre-school Special Education and the New York State Department of Education

Outcomes: Provides the expert early intervention needed to help children increase their self-esteem, develop communication skills, and prepare for long-term success in public school

Evaluation: Self-assessment validation instrument and monthly administrative meetings

More information: Lorie Gutchess, Broome County Child Development Council, Inc., (607) 723-8313

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Begun more than 15 years ago, the partnership is funded by the county's Committee on Pre-School Special Education and provides for speech therapists to work onsite at the Head Start center. "About 20 percent of the kids entering the program have some sort of speech or language impairment," said Lorie Gonchera, the special services coordinator at the center. "The partnership is a big help to them. The only problem we have experienced with the program is an occasional delay in service delivery due to a shortage of therapists in our area."

Staff members of the Broome County Child Development Council, Inc., Head Start program work closely with speech therapists at Rehabilitiation Services, Inc., a special education facility nearby. They not only help children with developmental delays but also help some learn basic English. Many of the children are refugees. Until last year, Broome County was designated a refugee relocation area by the federal government. As a result, one in ten children entering the program spoke a foreign language—Kurdish, Somali, Russian, and Urdu—very different from English.

But thanks to the Head Start–Special Education partnership in Broome County, very few of the children who receive speech therapy before kindergarten require additional help with language when they enter school.

3 Upcoming Partnerships

In the process of reviewing the submissions for Promising Partnerships, some programs that had been in service less than three years were recognized as exemplary. Due to the short duration of the programs, the Partnership Office elected to share these brief profiles with you to highlight some of the newest developments on the partnership front. You are encouraged to contact these programs for further information as the partnerships develop.

Quincy, California

New Directions: Partners in Employment and Education

The New Directions partnership has created a one-stop learning and career center to serve as a single point of access to education, training, employment, re-employment, and support services. In this partnership between the school district, community college, job training center, and county office of education, Sierra Cascade Family Opportunities Head Start provides the comprehensive child-care services that enable parents to participate in the many programs offered by the New Directions Center.

A critical component of the initial partnership planning was that decision-making authorities of the partner agencies were willing to meet, take risks, and commit time to the project. Sharing of resources has been an essential element of the partnership as well. Some agencies were able to provide furnishings for the center, while others provided training materials or dollars. The resources have been pooled to create a program that provides coherent, comprehensive, and customized service.

Future plans are to finalize the co-location of a continuation high school and Head Start program and develop a career center, computer lab, and shared orientation for clients. While these pieces are developed, benefits of the New Directions Center are already clear. Fewer people

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are falling through the cracks because needed training and employment services are accessible and convenient.

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Early Intervention Gives an Extra Head Start

A partnership in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, between Head Start and Early Intervention has promoted social-skill acquisition and developed understanding among children, staff, and parents in both programs.

Although Head Start and the Lancaster Lebanon Intermediate Unit (IU) 13 school district have worked together for almost 20 years, in the spring of 1995 they began planning to integrate children from Head Start and developmentally delayed classrooms.

Efforts to create shared partnership began when the Lancaster Community Action Program invited the IU 13 Early Intervention program to house two classrooms at the Head Start Family Advocacy Center. Teachers from both Head Start and IU 13 were key participants in the planning stages.

The partnership team developed several assumptions to guide its planning. Its members knew that they wanted daily integration for all eligible early intervention students. It was also important for integration opportunities to be meaningful, not limited to gross motor or

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playground activities. Furthermore, the partnership team planned to address issues of disability awareness, cultural respect, and family focus.

The partnership team knows that its ability to communicate will directly affect the success of its efforts. Therefore, the team will continue to strengthen its efforts through weekly meetings between participating Head Start staff and IU 13 teachers.

Fairfax, Virginia

Mental Health

The problem was clear for the Fairfax County Office for Children Head Start Program, but the solutions were complex. High-quality mental health professionals with experience working with low-income preschool children were difficult to find, and identifying funds to pay for these services was even more challenging.

As a result, in 1994 Head Start initiated the Fairfax County Coalition for Mental Health Services. The coalition incorporates a range of public and private partners, including Fairfax County Public School social workers, the Institute for Family-Centered Services, the Community Services Board, and the health department, as well as Head Start staff and parents.

The partnership's mission is threefold: (1) identify unmet mental-health needs of families with young children; (2) identify specific service-delivery gaps; and (3) advocate appropriate services for very young children.

One of the group's biggest successes so far has been the development of a comprehensive report exam-

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ining mental health needs in the community. The report will help the team focus its efforts to improve the delivery of appropriate services through multiagency coordination. In addition, the partners have developed a Mental Health Observation Guide designed to assist staff in identifying and assessing mental health needs.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Family Support: Program for Female Offenders

Several of the children enrolled in the Capital Area Head Start program in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, had mothers who were incarcerated in the county jail. So in 1995, the Head Start program made a phone call to the county's Program for Female Offenders to inquire about the possibility of blending the two programs. As a result, a partnership was formed to foster the bond between incarcerated mothers and their children and to teach the women here to be better mothers when reunited with their families.

While in prison, mothers may earn opportunities to visit with their children under the supervision of Head Start staff. Currently, twelve Head Start-eligible children of incarcerated mothers are served in a home-based program. An additional twelve children will be served in a center-based setting when the Program for Female Offenders opens a new work-release center. In that setting, mothers will have opportunities to spend time in a Head Start classroom practicing the skills they have learned as part of an ongoing nurturing program. A full-day, full-year Head Start program is slated as a future part of this center.

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A clear benefit of the program has been that incarcerated mothers are able to maintain ties with children who are living in the community with other caregivers. "It was hard for me to keep focused in here," one participant said. "But after I joined the program, I was more relaxed because the program not only helps you, it helps your kids, too."

4 How To Create a Partnership

"A single bracelet does not jingle." — African proverb

Lines are being redrawn in the early childhood field. Where there used to be walls, there are now windows of opportunity. Programs that were once self-sufficient are reaching out to build seamless networks of community support. The change in attitude is reflected by a change in language: We now work in collaboration with our partners, linking together in the name of children and families.

But it's not easy. As a matter of fact, it can be extremely challenging to turn brick walls into pathways of opportunity. Some partnerships produce such natural connections that the partners are amazed that they managed to work separately for so long. Other partnerships start with a noble and important mission in mind but can't seem to get past the organizational red tape. Even if they have some degree of success, these partnerships are not sustainable and the relationship eventually fades.

In this section we outline some critical steps for beginning and maintaining partnerships. Although we will build from the ground up, these ideas can also be applied to existing partnerships. If you are currently working in a partnership that you think could be strengthened, examine the steps and see if there are some you have missed. On the other hand, if you are just beginning to work in partnership, these guidelines can be a blueprint for action. Share them with your partners and demonstrate your commitment to the process of becoming partners.

Step 1: Getting Started

Most partnerships begin in response to a critical community need. It may be an immediate concern or an ongoing issue, but the first step is taken when one person or group says, "Couldn't we do this better together?" The answer is probably yes, but a large initial investment must be made if the process is to be worthwhile. A major component of that process is relationship-building. While funding may be important, people are the essential building blocks.

Partnerships may begin in two ways: building on and formalizing an existing relationship or seeking out new organizations. Many partnerships begin on an individual level, between people representing two different agencies sharing a common interest. These personal relationships should be valued and cultivated as an important first step for crossing agency boundaries. Leaders of many successful partnerships point to supportive administrators and directors who allowed them to participate in networking activities that built relationships with other service providers. Not only does such community involvement allow you to share the Head Start story, it also familiarizes you with the strengths and needs of other community groups—essential information for creating a partnership.

In other cases, partnerships may begin more formally. You may see a general need in your community that affects many groups in addition to Head Start. Or an issue may be confronting your program for which you feel you need additional resources. To meet these needs, you may want to research several potential partners to join with Head Start in creating solutions. Although your inclination may be to pick up the phone and get started, there are some pieces to think through first. In creating partnerships, you want to find partners who will be a good fit to your program and complement your strengths. When researching potential partners, consider these aspects of their organizations:

- What is their mission?
- What are some of their current initiatives?
- What is their management structure and how would it adapt to working with another organization?
- What are some of the resources they might bring to the partnership?

Researching organizations that match your program can be time-consuming. However, a good match can make the difference down the line when you are searching for common ground on which to build a partnership. It is important to find partners who share your vision and have the resources and management capability needed to support a partnership.

You also need to think through some aspects of your own organization. You will need to be able to articulate to potential partners the benefits of working together. You will want to be able to share some possible directions for the partnership. However, you do not want to provide too much information during the initial contact. The major pieces of the partnership will be designed by the team; during your first contact you will merely want to outline a few possibilities. Before picking up the phone, consider the following:

- The issue you are trying to address
- Why it is important to Head Start
- Why it is important to the group you are contacting
- What that group could gain from partnering with Head Start
- Some very general directions the partnership might take

With these ideas clear in your head, you are ready to start building the partnership team.

As you begin to build relationships with other agencies and programs outside of Head Start, consider the role parents may play. Having many parents—not just one representative—involved from the beginning will help ensure that your efforts are on track. Strong parent involvement will also demonstrate to potential partners the leadership roles parents play in the Head Start program.

Step 2: Setting the Tone

Once you have generated interest from potential partners, you are ready to arrange the first meeting. This meeting will set the tone for the relationship and will influence the direction of the partnership, so it is important to be well prepared. You will want to include top management of Head Start, directors and other representatives of the other possible partner organizations, and those most likely to carry out the work. This initial leadership involvement is important in gaining top-down support.

When arranging meetings, be flexible and accommodate your potential partners' and parents' schedules. It may be necessary to schedule evening or weekend meetings. Also, be sure to consider the location of meetings and how accessible they are to everyone. Your attention to these details will be appreciated.

Depending on the kind of relationship you have with your proposed partners, you will want to address several relationship-building topics before you even begin to talk about the action items for the partnership. It can be difficult to hold a conversation with someone you don't know, so take time to get to know one another's organizations. For example, many people outside of Head Start are not aware of the comprehensive services offered by the program, nor do they understand the strong leadership role played by parents. Furthermore, unfamiliar acronyms such as OSPRI and RAPs and terms such as "policy council" may not be familiar to them. While this may seem time-consuming, these initial discussions are very important in setting the stage for partnership.

A good way to start a partnership meeting is to introduce yourself and your organization. Step back and think about the questions you had when you first joined your organization. Keeping in mind that there is only so much people will remember in one sitting, describe the basics of your organization and ask your partners to do the same. This will be an ongoing process throughout the partnership, but you need to understand each other's language before you start discussing action. It is also good to remember that partnerships take place on two levels: personal and professional. Both relationships need to be comfortable in order for progress to take place, so initial conversations are important.

Once you have begun to introduce yourselves, take time to discuss the issues that have brought you together. There may be many perspectives on an issue, and all are valid. This too will be an ongoing discussion. Eventually partners should come to a consensus on the issues the partnership will address, but this may not occur at the first meeting.

The next step is to discuss the partnership possibilities in reference to the issues at hand. Establish goals, keeping in mind both short- and long-term perspectives. Short-term goals will provide a measure of success and maintain energy levels. Long-term goals will provide a framework and a point of return on which the partnership can focus. Both short- and long-term goals will serve as benchmarks for progress. Some examples:

- Short-Term Goal: To announce the partnership, the partnering organizations will work together to create a kick-off event for their members.

- Long-Term Goal: The partnering organizations will work together to create a two-week training course, using the skills and resources of both organizations to better educate their members.

Once the goals have been designed and agreed upon, it is important to publicize them and gain support from the organizational leadership. You may want to consider several ways of sharing your goals with the larger community such as announcements, newsletters, and meeting presentations. While partnerships may be led by a core group, they will be most sustainable if they achieve a wide range of support.

Step 3: Creating an Agreement

Partnership agreements serve many purposes. A well-written agreement will identify the work to be accomplished, the roles of each partner, and a general time-frame for action. While the agreements should be flexible, they also serve as a reference point. Many times there is so much potential that a partnership's direction can become unclear. Partnership agreements are useful in maintaining focus and evaluating what has been achieved (see Step 5).

The partnership agreement should be written jointly, and should include the following elements:

- The partnership's mission
- Goals to be accomplished
- General roles to be played by each partner
- Any financial arrangements that have been made
- Sign-off by the top management within each organization

While the agreement itself will be useful, the process of developing it is equally important. The dialogue that occurs around each part of the agreement will help frame the work to be accomplished and the next steps to be taken.

Step 4: Implementing the Partnership

An important consideration when beginning to implement the partnership is the commitment and availability of each partner. Give all partners an opportunity to say realistically how much time and effort they expect to contribute. Keep in mind that these commitment levels will vary, and that sometimes one partner may briefly carry the load. Establishing open communication on this issue from the beginning will prevent misunderstanding or frustration as the partnership proceeds.

When assigning the tasks to be completed, take into consideration the skills, resources, and experiences of each partner. Sharing the work is essential, but not everything has to be done together. Decisions about who should do what are made by consensus, but actually completing the tasks may be done independently.

Communication is the key to success throughout the entire partnership, but especially in the implementation phase. There is no substitute for regular, ongoing communication, whether it is in person or by conference call, fax, or E-mail. When the partners begin implementation, it is crucial to be able to complete tasks independently but to move forward in a common direction.

Some partnering organizations say they talk as many as three times a week. Others say they are closer to their partners in other organizations than to the staff in their own offices. However, the number of contacts per week or month is not as important as the comfort level necessary for good communication. Being able to reach out and brainstorm when needed, pass an idea by for approval, and report on progress is all part of effective communication. Formally discussing communication issues will allow you to put effective systems in place before problems arise.

Step 5: Evaluating the Program

As you implement your partnership plans, you will want to evaluate each step. The word *evaluation* makes many people nervous because they think that their own performance is to be rated. It is important to stress that it is the *process* of acting as partners and the *outcomes* of the partnership efforts that are being evaluated, with the sole intent of improving the partnership. At no time should *partnership evaluation* be confused with *job performance evaluation*.

Process evaluation explores how effectively the partners are working together and how their relationships could be improved. Methods for gathering this kind of information might include:

- Informal discussion among group members
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Anecdotal evidence

Your team may elect to design some indicators of successful partnerships, such as, "There is shared decision making in key partnership areas," or "Communication lines are open and used appropriately." In your action plan, include periodic reviews of the indicators to evaluate your working process.

Outcome evaluation measures the effects of your partnership on Head Start children and families. Indicators for success in this area should relate directly to partnership goals. For example, if your partnership is with the JOBS program and the goal is to decrease the number of unemployed Head Start parents, an indicator might be that there is a 10-percent drop in unemployment among parents within the first two years. These indicators should be measurable and also realistic, considering the time-frame and funding situation of the partnership. Some methods of evaluating partnership outcomes include:

- Surveys of parents, staff, and administrators
- Focus groups
- Phone interviews
- Comparing data gathered through family-needs assessments
- Community-needs assessments
- Program information reports

You will have a difficult time gathering both process and outcome information unless you have a clear purpose in mind for its use. Using evaluation results in order to maintain or increase funding is one important application. Many foundations now require that grant recipients create an evaluation component to ensure that funds are being used effectively. In addition to demonstrating the benefits of the partnership to funders, the evaluation will also help you maintain the support of the leadership of partnering organizations. Because of the initial time-investment needed to create a partnership, it is important to demonstrate to the leadership the outcomes of the efforts as well.

Perhaps the most important aspect of any evaluation is the re-application of the information to partnership efforts. You must take the time to assess how your work has impacted children and families in order to know how to continuously improve services. When you create your action plan, include the steps for creating an evaluation and applying the results to the partnership. This step is often overlooked, but it is as important as the original planning and implementation.

Also, keep in mind that evaluation provides an opportunity to celebrate success. When involved in a process as complex as building partnerships, be sure to take the time to acknowledge progress and applaud the efforts of your partners. Create opportunities for small successes so that the momentum continues for accomplishing the larger goals.

Step 6: Strengthening the Partnering Relationship

There will be many challenges to overcome in the process of becoming partners. There may be occasions when you question whether the time and effort is worth it, or whether you might just be able to do things faster on your own. It may seem like the turf issues are too big and the organizational structures too incompatible. If you think this is the case, it is essential that you be able to communicate your concerns with your partners. But in addition to sharing their thoughts, the team also needs to have the skills to overcome the problem. Consider the following strategies for strengthening partnership relationships:

- Engage in team-building activities, employing an outside facilitator when possible.
- Discuss methods for resolving conflict.
- Keep the goals and mission of the partnership visible and accessible at all times.
- Design clear lines of communication. Provide opportunities for open discussion.
- Delineate the decision-making structure.
- Be respectful of the organizational culture and structure of your partners.
- Give partners a chance for personal as well as professional interaction.
- Be courteous to your partners by inviting them to your organization's functions and sharing publications and news with them.
- Provide opportunities for joint learning and training.
- Celebrate your successes.

There is no set recipe for creating a partnership, but the steps listed above are essential ingredients in the process. Being familiar with the six steps and applying them to your partnership efforts will help you develop sustainable relationships. And if you are ever in doubt about why you are going through the effort to work with partners, remember the African proverb: A single bracelet does not jingle.

5 Conclusions

These profiles of promising partnerships teach us many lessons. Within each partnership, there is a spark that keeps it moving forward. Every team has to find its own spark, whether it is a motivational parent, the needs of a specific group of children, or the joint energy of those involved. Still, there are some common characteristics of successful partnerships, as shown in the profiles. In most of these partnerships:

1. Serving families and children is a priority.

2. A personal as well as professional relationship has developed.

3. There is a commitment to change from all partners.

4. There is shared leadership between partners.

5. Turf issues are overlooked in search of common ground.

These components do not appear overnight, but are cultivated as team members explore the process of becoming partners. In order to develop these five components, the commitment to that process is essential. Becoming partners is challenging, but as people in the early childhood field well know, children and families are too important for us ever to lose sight of that commitment.

A Appendix A: Glossary

Agreement: a written, formalized document that details a partnership's objectives and can be used in outreach efforts to educate the public.

Block granting: a movement at the national level to decentralize control of federal programs to the states.

Child-care provider: an agency, institution, or establishment that provides child-care services.

Collaboration: the process of joint decision making among partners. Collaborations may address a single issue or a short-term concern.

Day care: a program, facility, or organization offering supervision of and care for children or disabled adults.

Evaluation: an appraisal of a group, partnership, or organization to determine how well it is accomplishing its set goals and objectives and how well it is benefiting the participants it set out to serve.

Finance: to raise or provide funds for a service or program.

Full day: a facility that provides child-care services for six or more hours on a regular schedule.

GED: General Educational Development. Passing the GED test certifies general knowledge and is equivalent to earning a high-school diploma.

Half-day: a Head Start or child care facility that provides child care for four hours or less on a regular schedule.

Head Start: a federal program that serves the educational, psychological, and health needs of low-income preschool children and their families.

Home-based program: a Head Start program that allows parents to receive education, health, and nutrition assistance in their home.

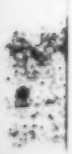
In-kind: dollars or services that match outside funding.

Interdependency: the sharing of information and good working relations between the partnering agencies.

JOBS: Job Opportunities and Basic Skills, a federal program that promotes employment training and education.

Mission Statement: goals and objectives articulated by those who develop a partnership.

Male Involvement: the participation and influence of a significant male or father in a child's education and development.



Management: the collective team that leads and gives overall direction for partnership activities.

OSPRI: On Site Program Review Instrument.

Parent/family support: services to parents and families that meet needs beyond those regularly addressed by the Head Start program.

Parent involvement: the parental influence in a child's education and development.

Partnerships: relationships developed between two or more organizations in order to meet an overall community goal and to offer short- or long-term services.

Policy Council: parent committees that are directly involved in decision-making for local Head Start programs, including personnel matters and the allocation of funds.

Pre-K: Pre-kindergarten.

RAP: Regional Access Project.

WIC: Special supplemental food program for Women, Infants, and Children, a federal program to improve the health of low-income women, infants, and preschool children determined to be at nutritional risk.

B Appendix B: Information Form

The National Head Start Association's Partnership Office is interested in learning about your partnership efforts. Please complete the following form and return it to: Partnership Office, National Head Start Association, 1651 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Or fax it to: (703) 739-0878.

Head Start Program Name:

Contact Person:

Address:

Phone and Fax number:

Partnership Team Members:

Partnership Focus and Mission:

Partnership Outcomes:

Length of time partnership has existed:

Can the Partnership Office contact you for more information?

C Appendix C: Response Form

The National Head Start Association's Partnership Office continuously strives to improve its membership services. Your feedback is essential in that process. Thank you for completing the following form and returning it to: Partnership Office, National Head Start Association, 1651 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Or fax it to: (703) 739-0878.

Please rate the questions below on the following scale:

Questions:	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I learned new partnership strategies from this publication.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I will be able to apply these lessons to my work in Head Start.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I will share this publication with my colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
4. This publication presents a comprehensive overview of Head Start partnerships.	1	2	3	4	5

5. What other elements could have been included in the publication?

6. What other partnership publications would be useful to you in your work?

7. Additional comments:

Optional:

Name _____

Program _____

Address _____

Phone and fax number _____

NHSA member? _____

National Head Start Association Membership Application

YES! I want to join my peers as a member of the nation's only organization dedicated exclusively to serving the needs of the Head Start community.

Please print clearly. Check all boxes that a

☐ **Individual membership**
- ☐ Sustaining $30
- ☐ Basic (Head Start parents only) $5

☐ **Head Start agency membership**
- ☐ Budget less than $2,000,000 $200
- ☐ Budget greater than $2,000,000 $500
- ☐ Budget greater than $5,000,000 $800

☐ **Corporate** $350

☐ **Affiliate** (Nonprofit organizations) $100

☐ Agency ☐ Director ☐ Staff ☐ Parent ☐ Friend

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Membership extends from July 1 to June 30. Note: Dues are not used for legislative activities. NHSA relies upon other, non-federal funds to accomplish its legislative goals. NHSA agency dues are allowable expenses of federal grant funds. Individual dues cannot be paid from grant funds. If you have any questions, please call (703) 739-0875.

Please return form to: NHSA, Department 899, Alexandria, VA 22334-0899

National Head Start Association

The National Head Start Association produces a variety of publications to assist Head Start parents and staff. Your agency library should not be without any of these valuable resources. (This is a partial list of publications available through NHSA).

Ordering Is Easy!

YES! Place my order for these NHSA publications:

Title	Members	Others	Qty.	Total
P103 NHSA Ideas Booklet	$20	$25		
P106 Voter Participation and Lobby Guide	$5	$7		
P107 Legislative Notebook	$6	$8		
P109 Head Start Yellow Pages	$20	$25		
P114 Head Start Works	$6	$8		
P116 Parent Guide After Head Start	$2	$4		
P117 Child and Family Resource Directory	$7	$9		
P119 Healthy Families America/Partnership Guide	$2.50	$4.50		
P125 Success Stories	$20	$25		
P126 Investing in Quality Revisited	$5	$7		

Shipping Charges

Orders up to $20	$ 4
Orders from $20.01 to $50	$ 6
Orders from $50.01 to $100	$10
Orders over $100	$12

Subtotal _____

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Total Due _____

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Phone _____

Member Number _____

Send check, money order, or purchase order made payable to NHSA, Department 899, Alexandria, VA 22334-0899 **OR**, call 1-800-687-5044. Visa, MasterCard and purchase orders accepted.

National
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Association

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